

Message Text

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ACTION AGRE-00

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08 INR-10
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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAGR, CH
SUBJECT: PRC CROP CONDITIONS

REF: STATE 115254

1. IN RESPONSE TO REFTTEL, WE ARE REPEATING BELOW FAS HONG
KONG REPORT NUMBER 8016 (CODE 24AL; MAY 3, 1978).

2. SUMMARY: ON APRIL 25, THE PRC STATE COUNCIL CALLED AN
EMERGENCY ANTI-DROUGHT TELEPHONE CONFERENCE TO ENCOURAGE THE
RURAL CADRE AND PEASANTS TO PROTECT WINTER WHEAT AND COMPLETE
SPRING SOWING DESPITE DROUGHT. WHILE DROUGHT IS PROBABLY OF
GENUINE CONCERN IN SOME AREAS, WEATHER DATA TOGETHER WITH THE
GENERAL TENOR OF THE MESSAGE SUGGEST THE CONFERENCE WAS DE-
SIGNED MORE TO ENCOURAGE THE MOBILIZATION OF PEASANTS TO ACCEL-
ERATE SPRING FARMING THAN TO FIGHT DROUGHT. END SUMMARY

3. A NUMBER OF PROVINCES HAVE COMPLAINED OF UNFAVORABLE
WEATHER, FEW OF WHICH HAVE SOUNDED UNUSUALLY SERIOUS.
THE TELEPHONE CONFERENCE IS THE FIRST TO ELEVATE
WEATHER PROBLEMS TO A NATIONAL BASIS. ACCORDING TO THE
NEW CHINA NEWS AGENCY (NCNA), APRIL 26, THE STATE COUNCIL
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CALLED ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 25 AN URGENT NATIONWIDE
TELEPHONE CONFERENCE ON DROUGHT COMBATING TO MAP OUT MEAS-
URES TO "PROTECT" WHEAT AND INSURE SPRING PLANTING. THE
PEOPLE'S DAILY PD2
OF APRIL 27 PUBLISHED AN EDITORIAL ON
THE NCNA RELEASE. BOTH THE PD EDITORIAL AND THE NCNA RE-
LEASE ON THE URGENT TELEPHONE CONFERENCE SATED THE FOLLOW-

ING:

-- DROUGHT HAS BEGUN TO DEVELOP IN MANY AREAS, ESPECIALLY THE MAJOR WHEAT AREAS, SINCE THE BEGINNING OF APRIL. IT WAS AGGRAVATED BY THE HIGH TEMPERATURES AND HIGH WINDS THAT PREVAILED DURING THE MONTH, AND QUICKENED THE DEPLETION OF SOIL MOISTURE CONTENT.

-- THE SOIL MOISTURE SITUATION WAS RATHER GOOD DURING THE EARLY PART OF THE YEAR, WHICH IN MANY AREAS LED TO THE COMPLACENCY OF THE CADRES TOWARDS THE DROUGHT.

-- VICE PREMIER KANG SHIH-EN POINTED OUT DURING THE TELEPHONE CONFERENCE THAT PEOPLE SHOULD BE AWARE OF THE SERIOUS NATURE OF THE DROUGHT, BUT SHOULD AT THE SAME TIME LOOK AT THE POSITIVE FACTORS THAT WOULD HELP COMBAT THE DROUGHT. (ACCORDING TO NCNA, 70 PERCENT OF THE 3.8 MILLION HECTARES OF WHEAT IN SHANTUNG HAD BEEN WATERED, AND ONE-HALF OF THE 4.14 MILLION HECTARES OF WHEAT IN HONAN HAD BEEN IRRIGATED.)

-- AGRICULTURAL MINISTER YANG LI-KUNG COMMENTED ON THE WINTER CROP SITUATION AT THE CONFERENCE. HE SAID THAT THE WINTER CROPS HAD A GOOD FOUNDATION, WERE WELL TAKEN CARE OF, HAD A GOOD STAND AND WERE GROWING WELL. BARRING THE OCCURRENCE OF DISASTROUS WEATHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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CONDITIONS, THE SUMMER HARVEST THIS YEAR WOULD BE A BUMPER ONE. HE POINTED OUT, HOWEVER, THAT THE AREA AFFECTED BY DROUGHT WAS QUICKLY EXPANDING BECAUSE OF THE PREVAILING HIGH TEMPERATURES AND HIGH WINDS.

-- THE PROVINCES AFFECTED BY DROUGHT HAD ALREADY HELD MEETINGS TO START A DRIVE TO COMBAT THE DROUGHT.

EARLIER IN THE YEAR, THERE WERE COMPLAINTS OF THE MILD WINTER THAT HAD RESULTED IN AN EXCESSIVE GROWTH OF THE WINTER CROP PLANTS. THERE WERE WARNINGS AGAINST POSSIBLE SEVERE LATE FROST.

4. MORE RECENTLY, AREAS IN SOUTH CHINA COMPLAINED ABOUT PROLONGED LOW TEMPERATURES AND WET WEATHER. AS A RESULT OF SUCH WEATHER CONDITIONS, THE HARVESTING OF THE WINTER CROPS WAS DELAYED, WHICH IN TURN PUSHED BACK THE TRANSPLANTING OF EARLY RICE. (WEN HUI PAO, HONG KONG, APRIL 11, 1978, ON KWANGTUNG? NCNA, APRIL 23, 1978, ON KWANGSI).

5. THE SPRING PLANTING OF DRYLAND CROPS IN KWANGTUNG, HOWEVER, WAS FASTER THIS YEAR THAN LAST (OP. CIT. WEN HUI

PAO). IN KWEICHOW, WHICH HAS BEEN SUFFEREING FROM A PRO-
LONGED SPRING DROUGHT, A MUCH LARGER AREA HAS BEEN SOWN
TO UPLAND CROPS SUCH AS CORN AND POTATOES THIS YEAR
THAN LAST YEAR (NCNA, APRIL 24, 1978).

6. THE WEATHER PROBLEMS IN SPRING OF 1978 VIS-A-VIS THE
SPRING OF 1977 ARE AS FOLLOWS:

1977 SPRING	1978 SPRING
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SEVERE WINTER; PROBABLY HEAVY WINTER KILL.	MILD WINTER; EXCESSIVE GROWTH OF OVERWINTERING CROP PLANTS.
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WORST SPRING DROUGHT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE	DROUGHT DID NOT START UNTIL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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SINCE 1949; BOTH NORTH APRIL. WINTER WHEAT AREAS
AND SOUTH WERE AFFECTED. PARTICULARLY AFFECTED.

PRECIPITATION IN WIDE SHORTAGE OF RAIN CONTINUING
AREAS OCCURRED IN LATE UP TO END OF APRIL IN MAJOR
APRIL. WHEAT AREAS.

DROUGHT IN SOUTH OBSTRUCTED LOW TEMPERATURES AND WET
TRANSPLANTING OF EARLY WEATHER IN SOUTH DELAYED
RICE. RIPENING OF SPRING HARVESTED
CROPS, WHICH IN TURN DELAYED
EARLY RICE TRANSPLANTING.

7. COMMENT: THE AGRICULTURAL SITUATION IN 1978 IS DIF-
FERENT FROM THAT OF 1977. OUR ASSESSMENT OF THE CROP
PROSPECTS ON THE BASIS OF THE WEATHER THUS FAR THIS YEAR IS
AS FOLLOWS: (1) AS FAR AS SUMMER HARVEST IS CONCERNED,
CONDITIONS THUS FAR IN 1978 ARE BETTER THAN IN 1977, AL-
THOUGH THE CROP MAY NOT BE AS GOOD AS YANG LI-KUNG HOPED.

(2) THE PLANTING OF DRYLAND CROPS PARTICULARLY IN THE SOUTH
DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN AFFECTED BY THE DROUGHT BUT THE
TRANSPLANTING OF EARLY RICE IS LAGGING. (3) THE SIGNI-
FICANT IMPACT OF THE WEATHER ON THE YEAR'S CROP PROSPECTS
APPEARS TO BE THE DELAYED MATURING OF SPRING HARVESTED
CROPS IN THE SOUTH. IT DELAYED, IN TURN, THE TRANSPLANTING
OF EARLY RICE, WHICH MAY EVENTUALLY ADVERSELY AFFECT THE
AREA AND YIELD OF LATE RICE. (4) OF COURSE, MUCH DEPENDS ON
THE DEVELOPMENT OF GROWING CONDITIONS DURING THE REMAINDER
OF THE GROWING CYCLE. (5) CONDITIONS WERE RELATIVELY POOR
IN NORTH CHINA IN THE FALL OF 1977 FOR THE SOWING OF WINTER
WHEAT (TOFAS 220). THE ACREAGE OF WINTER WHEAT IN SHANTUNG
PROVINCE IS ABOUT 5 PERCENT LESS THAN LAST YEAR AND THE
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ACREAGE IS ALSO BELIEVED TO BE DOWN IN HOPEH PROVINCE. THE
ACREAGE IN HONAN PROVINCE IS REPORTEDLY ABOUT THE SAME AS
LAST YEAR. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN RECENT COMPLAINTS ABOUT
THE CONDITION OF THE CROP (TOFAS 64). (6) BARRING UN-
FAVORABLE WEATHER BEFORE SUMMER HARVEST, WE BELIEVE THE
WHEAT CROP WILL BE ABOUT AVERAGE WHICH WOULD PLACE IT IN THE
RANGE OF 45.0 MMT TO 47.0 MMT AS COMPARED TO AN OUTTURN OF
43.0 MMT LAST YEAR AND A RECORD OUTTURN OF 50.0 MMT IN 1976.
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